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# Arts Education in the Chautauqua Movement

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# Arts Education in the Chautauqua Movement

**by**

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# Dedication

To my family, who showed me that learning could be fun.

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# Abstract

## Arts Education in the Chautauqua Movement

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This study investigated arts education programs in the Chautauqua Movement during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Chautauqua Movement was a nationwide phenomenon that combined education with entertainment and sought to provide educational opportunities to rural communities with public gatherings and at-home learning offerings. This study focused on Chautauqua programs from the Movement's founding in 1874 through 1930. Arts programs, in this study, included visual arts, music, and theatre. This research centered on the examination of published historical studies, memoirs, event programs, and photographs. Arts education programs in the Chautauqua Movement included lectures and demonstrations by visual artists, musical performances featuring a variety sizes and styles, and theatrical productions ranging from dramatic readings to hit Broadway plays. It was concluded in this study that a variety of art forms were present in these Chautauqua gatherings, which provided a rich body of entertainment and education in the arts for those who attended.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This study investigated arts education and arts programs in the Chautauqua Movement between its founding in 1874 through the decline of most of Chautauqua's public meetings in the late 1920s. The Chautauqua Movement began with a single meeting in rural New York and expanded to hundreds of annual meetings nationwide along with at-home learning opportunities.

The goal of the Chautauqua Movement was to bring cultural education and entertainment to rural communities. During this time rural communities had little access to large cities and many people lacked the funding for a university education. Chautauqua meetings provided educational opportunities through lectures and performances during the summer months. The arts programs offered at Chautauqua meetings were often the only structured arts education available to residents in rural communities. Arts programs during this movement included visual arts, music, and theatre.

The visual arts were represented at Chautauqua meetings by artist demonstration-lectures, chalk talks, and lectures on interior design. Visual arts also had a strong presence in the at-home offerings of the Chautauqua Movement. Many of the books on the reading list of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC), an at-home study course with assigned readings, featured various art and art history topics. The Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk, an activity desk with lessons situated on moving scrolls, was designed to provide children instruction in art and other subjects, much like the CLSC did for adults.

Music and theatre existed mostly at the Chautauqua meetings as a result of the importance of performance for both. Most Chautauqua meetings, beginning with the original meeting in 1874 through the circuits, had at least one musical performance. These ranged from small ensembles to large symphonies and included a variety of styles. The first examples of theatre in the Chautauqua Movement were dramatic readings of plays by a single performer. Theatre expanded and flourished in the later circuit Chautauquas and eventually became the featured entertainment replacing lectures almost entirely.

By studying the arts programs offered in the Chautauqua Movement, we can learn about early community-based arts education opportunities available in the United States and become inspired by a nationwide phenomenon that helped to shape modern informal arts education in the twentieth century.

## CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the following questions: What type of arts education programs did Chautauqua offer between the original Chautauqua meeting in 1874 and 1930? What art education programs did the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC) and other similar at-home programs offer to citizens in this same time period?

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

One of the problems addressed by this study is the limited amount of historically directed information about informal art education that is available to us today. Most of what we know about historical matters in art education focuses on formal school settings. There are many books and articles written about the historical aspects of art education in schools, like Efland's (1990) *A History of Art Education: Intellectual and Social Currents in Teaching the Visual Arts*, but less is written about art education in informal settings. Bolin, Blandy, and Congdon's (2000) volume and the work by Congdon, Blandy, and Bolin (2001) include studies of art education outside of schools, but more research on overlooked features of art education can de done. It is important to explore art education as it occurred outside schools because these forms of informal education can often reach a wider audience than a traditional school setting. Informal art education sites like museums and community-based art programs provide significant opportunities for art lessons and activities to reach an audience that may include learners of all ages. Many programs of informal education are designed for a variety of learners such as preschool-age children, school-age children, young adults, adults, and family or multigenerational audiences that are not typically reached in a traditional school classroom setting.

Another problem addressed by this study is the narrow view we have of art education as only including the visual arts. By expanding the more constricted view of art and exploring related fields like music, theatre, and dance, we gain a greater sense of what art and art education could be. A broader view of art education provides educators with a

stronger foundation on which to build their programs and gives audiences a deeper, more complete understanding of the arts.

## MOTIVATIONS FOR RESEARCH

I became interested in researching the Chautauqua Movement after reading Gladney's (2000) book chapter "Chautauqua Spirit**:** Exploring Historical Programs and Contemporary Connections," in one of my first year graduate courses. I had heard the word Chautauqua prior to this, but was unaware of its meaning or significance. I first encountered the word Chautauqua while attending school at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas as an undergraduate student. The school's Old Main building sits at the top of Chautauqua Hill. After reading Gladney's article and doing some preliminary research, I learned the significance of the name Chautauqua. San Marcos was the home of an independent Chautauqua between 1885 and 1895, not too long before the university was founded as Southwest Texas State Normal School in 1899. In the fall of 2012, Texas State University opened a new student dormitory named Chautauqua, which further demonstrates the importance of the Chautauqua Movement for the town of San Marcos and the university.

My interest in history, especially history dealing with everyday life, was another reason this topic appealed to me. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw rapid changes in everyday life as a result of technological innovations like the personal automobile and motion pictures, as well as political and social changes such as those brought on by the entry of the United States into World War I. In my research, I was

curious to see if the Chautauqua Movement reflected any of the changes that occurred in the United States during this time.

This topic also interested me because this historical program sounded like something my family would have attended at that time. We spent many weekends and summer vacations learning in our spare time, much like the Chautauqua goers of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We often visited nature centers, museums, and historic sites to gain the most from our vacation time. Our outings included lectures and other educational activities on a variety of subjects, including plant and animal life, historic events and people, and geological formations. I could envision my family attending a Chautauqua meeting if we were planning a vacation around the turn of the century.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This historical study of arts education in the Chautauqua Movement examined event programs, memoirs and other firsthand accounts, and photographs of the time, in addition to historical studies found in books and journals. I visited local libraries and archives to gather information about this topic. Internet archives and other websites like the Chautauqua Institute's Online Archive were also an important part of my research.

In my research, I started with only a few books and articles but quickly found much more. After reading Gladney's (2000) book chapter, I found DeBrecht's (2011) thesis and Henderson's (1938) sourcebook of Chautauqua materials on the Texas State University website. These sources provided an abundance of information on historic

Chautauqua programs as well as leads to other valuable resources. One of those sources was Chautauqua co-founder John H. Vincent's (1889) book, which includes information regarding ideas behind the movement and his hopes for the contemporary impact and future development. Another valuable published source was Morrison's (1974) book on Chautauqua, with several chapters dedicated to the arts programs conducted at these gatherings.

In addition to published sources, I searched for historical documents and primary accounts of Chautauquas in my area. I found event programs from several Texas Chautauquas at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at The University of Texas at Austin. These programs gave me an initial look at the specifics of a Chautauqua meeting, and as described by Korzenik (1983), provided "evidence of what people actually did" (p. 18). They contain important information about daily schedules, lecture subjects, and in some cases in-depth information about people and groups performing at the Chautauqua meeting. At the Harry Ransom Center at The University of Texas at Austin, I found two personal accounts of life as a performer on the Chautauqua platform and a textbook given to students taking a photography class from the Chautauqua Institute in the late 1800s.

The combination of historical studies, personal accounts from organizers and performers, photographs, textbooks, and event programs gave me a rich glimpse into the Chautauqua Movement, including the arts programs associated with this intriguing education and entertainment activity of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Art or Visual Art: Visual and tangible objects made by human hands. These can be classified under architecture, sculpture, the pictorial arts (painting, drawing, printmaking, photography), and the craft arts, or arts of design, which produce objects of utility, like ceramic wares, metal wares, textiles, and similar accessories of ordinary living (Tansey & Kleiner, 1996, p. 3).
- Arts: The tangible product created by humans, including visual arts and design, music, theatre, and dance.
- Chautauqua: A late nineteenth and early twentieth century movement dedicated to informal education, founded by John H. Vincent and Lewis Miller. It also refers to a meeting or event that hosted lectures and other programs as part of the movement.
- Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk: One of the at-home offerings of the Chautauqua Movement designed for children in the early twentieth century. It was a desk that was designed like a secretary desk and could be hung on the wall with the writing surface folding up for storage. There were scrolls that could be changed for various lessons, and the desk also included a handbook for parents or teachers.
- Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC): An individual, at-home reading course that covered several different subjects each year founded in 1878. After completing four years of assigned reading, a participant earned a certificate much like they would with a traditional, four-year university education.

- Circuit Chautauqua: The third and final phase of public meetings in the Chautauqua Movement beginning in 1904. Circuit Chautauquas are the most well known type of Chautauqua, but also the farthest removed from Vincent's original vision. Circuit Chautauquas were an organized program of events conducted by booking agencies and designed so that they were able to travel to different locations, like a tour. They offered higher quality programs and were less expensive than previous independent Chautauquas.
- Event program: A souvenir program printed for a Chautauqua meeting or assembly. An event program included the daily schedule for the assembly and information about performers and lecturers.
- Independent Chautauqua: The second phase of public meetings in the Chautauqua Movement. Beginning only a few years after the original Chautauqua meeting in 1874, communities across the nation began to host their own Chautauqua meetings. These independent Chautauquas had no formal connection to the original Chautauqua in New York, but adopted their design of educating and entertaining programs. Independent Chautauquas largely disappeared with the beginning of circuit Chautauquas.
- Music: Auditory programs including singing and instrumental performances from individuals or ensembles both large and small.
- Original Chautauqua: The beginning of the Chautauqua Movement and the first phase of public Chautauqua meetings. The original Chautauqua meeting was held

in August of 1874 and was designed as a training session for Sunday School teachers with programs that were both educational and entertaining.

- Theatre: Performances involving actors or actresses including dramatic readings, plays, musicals, and operas.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study focused on Chautauqua programs between 1874 and 1930, including Chautauqua meetings or events as well as the at-home activities related to the Chautauqua Movement. This study also focused on the visual art, music, and theatre programs associated with the Chautauqua Movement. There were many other educational and entertainment features of these various Chautauqua events. However, this study was directed toward the programs that emphasized the arts.

## BENEFITS TO THE FIELD OF ART EDUCATION

This study adds to our knowledge of the history of informal art education by exploring an active and widespread education and entertainment program between the years 1874 and 1930. The Chautauqua Movement was an incredible phenomenon that took place across the United States for more than fifty years. However, relatively little has been written about the Chautauqua Movement within the field of art education. Understanding how the Chautauqua Movement captivated such a wide audience for so many years will enable us to gain a more full and rich perspective about art education in a time beyond our own today. It could help contemporary art educators develop their own programs as we

look to make art available to new and untapped audiences. This study also expands the view of art education to include other art mediums like include music and theatre. A more inclusive view of art education gives art educators a stronger foundation for their programs and provides audiences a more expanded and complete art experience.

# Chapter 2: Review of Literature

When conducting historical research or engaging in studies of the past, frequently there are many types of sources to consider. These sources range from published histories and primary accounts to sources on historical research and the history of an academic field. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an introductory review of the materials most relevant to this study. This chapter is divided into four sections: Local History and Historical Research, Art Education History, General Sources on the Chautauqua Movement, and Primary Sources and Original Documents Related to the Chautauqua Movement.

## LOCAL HISTORY AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Conducting inquiry into a program from the past like the Chautauqua Movement requires a historical research direction. There are many comprehensive guides to conducting historical research. The most useful historical research guides for my study were *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You* (2nd ed.) by David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty (2000), *The Historian's Toolbox: A Students Guide to the Theory and Craft of History* by Robert C. Williams (2003), and Paul E. Bolin's (2013) book chapter titled *From Acquaintance to Argument: Five Phases of Historical Investigation within Art Education*. All three of these sources provide strategies for forming a substantial and interesting question as well as methods for gathering information.

Kyvig and Marty (2000) focus on exploring the everyday past around you. The authors state that, "nearly everyone is surrounded by a vast assortment of people, objects, and institutions, each with a potentially interesting past about which an enormous amount of information exists in one form or another" (p. 15). There is much that can be learned from studying the past in your community. Exploring the nearby past provides you a deeper, more meaningful understanding of the way events or people from the past shaped the community and how it developed into its present state. Investigating local history also provides an opportunity for researchers, and sometimes readers, to develop a more personal connection to the subject, which often results in more engaging research. In the first half of *The Historian's Toolbox*, Williams (2003) introduces the subject of history itself and describes how history and historical research have developed over time. The second half of the book describes the tools a historian employs, including how to choose a topic, strategies for writing a beneficial historical paper, and how to use different types of sources. Bolin (2013) guides students and researchers through the process of doing historical research in art education from beginning to end in five phases. The chapter includes examples from the author's own experience doing historical research and assisting students with their research.

In addition to strategies for interpreting traditional sources like books, Kyvig and Marty (2000) and Bolin (2013) also include investigative approaches for examining everyday objects and images that are often overlooked in order to learn about the past. Looking at these types of sources gives the researcher a chance to make their own conclusions or provide support for the ideas they have read by other authors. Diana

Korzenik (1985) explores the idea of studying objects in an article titled "Doing Historical Research." In the article, Korzenik explains how she encouraged her students to find physical pieces of evidence or real objects as part of their historical research. One of the students identified and researched a Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk from the early twentieth century and based their research around this object. I used these strategies in my investigation when I studied photographs and event programs from the Chautauqua Movement.

## ART EDUCATION HISTORY

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of studies in art education that involve historical research. Looking at these sources provided context for my study within art education and in some cases these art education histories included information that dealt directly with the Chautauqua Movement. Many historical studies in art education focus on formal art education in schools. Arthur D. Efland's (1990) book titled *A History of Art Education: Intellectual and Social Currents in Teaching the Visual Arts* centers on the history of the visual arts in schools, but there are historical studies in art education that cover art education outside the formal, school setting.

In two books of collected studies, editors Paul E. Bolin, Doug Blandy, and Kristen G. Congdon examine art education in a variety of settings and time periods that are often overlooked. Bolin, Blandy, and Congdon's (2000) *Remembering Others: Making Invisible Histories of Art Education Visible* includes sections on art education histories in formal settings, community arts and museums, and folk groups. The source

that first sparked my interest in the Chautauqua Movement was Sandra K. Gladney's chapter from this book titled "Chautauqua Spirit: Exploring Historical Programs and Contemporary Connections." Like other chapters in the book, Gladney explores a little known program in the history of art education and brings it to our attention. Congdon, Blandy, and Bolin's (2001) *Histories of Community-Based Art Education* is a continuation of *Remembering Others* and picks up where the first book left off, but focuses all the chapters on community-based education.

While Bolin, Blandy, and Congdon (2000) and Congdon, Blandy, and Bolin (2001) establish a wider context for art education outside schools, I also found sources in art education that deal directly with the Chautauqua Movement. Korzenik's (1985) article "Doing Historical Research" includes information and interpretations of the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk in addition to using it as an example of physical evidence in art education history. Walter Pinto and Peter Smith (1999) extend Korzenik's study in their article "An Artifact as History in Art Education." Pinto and Smith include information on the history and design of the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk along with pictures of and related to the Desk. In an earlier article titled "The Ecology of Picture Study," Smith (1986) discusses the history of the Picture Study Movement, which was popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, around the same time the Chautauqua Movement was popular. In the article, Smith discusses Oscar W. Neale, a popular figure in the Picture Study Movement, and his time as a speaker on the Chautauqua circuit.

## General Sources on the Chautauqua Movement

General sources focused on the Chautauqua Movement made up a large portion of my research. There are many books, book chapters, articles, and other materials written about the history of the Chautauqua Movement. These sources provide an overview of the Chautauqua Movement from the initial idea and first Chautauqua meeting in the summer of 1874 to the movement that eventually became a nationwide phenomenon that included public meetings and at-home programs. While many sources cover a general history of the Chautauqua Movement, a few of them focus on a specific aspect of Chautauqua's history. The Chautauqua Movement can be divided into three phases for study: (a) the original Chautauqua meeting in rural New York, (b) independent Chautauqua meetings, and (c) circuit Chautauqua meetings. In addition to these three phases of public meetings, the Chautauqua Movement included programs for at-home study in the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC) and the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk.

One of the earliest histories of the Chautauqua Movement was written by co-founder John H. Vincent in 1886, just twelve years after the original assembly in 1874, titled *The Chautauqua Movement*. In his book, Vincent describes his vision of creating Chautauqua meetings to make education more accessible to the masses. He also discusses the CLSC as a way to extend the Chautauqua experience and continue learning at home.

General histories of the Chautauqua Movement provided information about the movement as whole and how it eventually grew to be a nationwide phenomenon. Two of the most helpful books on the general history of Chautauqua for this study were Joseph E.

Gould's (1961) *The Chautauqua Movement: An Episode in the Continuing American Revolution* and Theodore Morrison's (1974) *Chautauqua: A Center for Education, Religion, and the Arts in America.* Gould (1961) covers a full historical investigation of the Chautauqua Movement from its origins through the heyday of the circuits and their decline in the late 1920s. Morrison (1974) focuses much attention on the original Chautauqua site in New York, but includes histories of independent and circuit Chautauquas as well. One of the most helpful aspects of Morrison's (1974) study was the emphasis placed on the importance of the arts. There are two chapters devoted exclusively to the arts, with one centered on music and one focused on the other arts. The final chapter is composed primarily of photographs, because according to Morrison the story of Chautauqua cannot be told in words alone.

One interesting perspective on the Chautauqua experience comes from Cindy S. Aron (1999) in the book *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States.* In the book, there is a chapter titled "No late hours, no headache in the morning…" that discusses self-improvement vacations like Chautauqua. The chapter title comes from an 1895 Chautauqua newspaper editorial describing the virtues of a Chautauqua vacation. Aron (1999) describes reasons people chose a Chautauqua vacation, stating that Chautauqua visitors were "shielded from the sin of idleness," among other moralizing factors (p. 126).

In addition to general histories, there are also books and studies that deal with specific time periods or aspects of the Chautauqua Movement. Jeffery Simpson's (1999) *Chautauqua: An American Utopia* tells about the original site in rural New York, from

the first assembly in 1874 through present day. Simpson includes many interesting historical details and anecdotes alongside photographs that span Chautauqua's history from 1874 to the 1990s.

There is comparatively little written about the history of the independent Chautauquas, because many of them were short lived and the later circuit Chautauquas often overshadowed them. Margaret M. DeBrecht's (2011) recent masters degree thesis titled *The Texas Chautauqua Movement: A Study of the San Marcos Independent Assembly* provides much needed information on the little studied phase of the movement. The thesis begins with a historical look at the Chautauqua Movement. It then moves to a discussion of Texas Chautauquas, and ends with the story of the Chautauqua in San Marcos, Texas, a small town about 30 miles south of Austin. Another important resource on independent Chautauquas also comes from San Marcos, Texas. Ruby Henderson's (1938) *A Source Book of the San Marcos Chautauqua, 1885-1895* was prepared as a requirement for a class on the history of education in Texas, and includes excerpts from local newspapers, schedules for the summer sessions, and information about the planning of the San Marcos Chautauqua.

The circuit Chautauquas are the most well known of Chautauqua's phases, because of their popularity and wide dispersal across the nation. These traveling events featured a set program of performers organized by companies and booking agencies and sold to different towns. Two useful books on the history of the circuit Chautauquas are John E. Tapia's (1997) *Circuit Chautauqua* and Charlotte M. Canning's (2005) *The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance*. Both books contain

detailed information and historical analysis of these circuits. Tapia includes descriptions of the arts programs in different years of the circuit Chautauquas.

There are also books written about the Chautauqua Movement that include firsthand knowledge and experience from the authors, in addition to general history. Hurlbut (1921) and Orchard (1923) include descriptions of the Chautauqua Movement along with information from their own experiences with the organization. Hurlbut, an associate of Vincent's from his Sunday School work, joined the Chautauqua meetings in 1875 and took part in fifty gatherings (Morrison, 1974). Orchard gave his first Chautauqua lecture in 1896, and helped organize Chautauqua meetings during the first decade of the twentieth century.

### PRIMARY SOURCES AND ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

The works by Hurlbut (1921), Orchard (1923), and Vincent (1886) could be categorized as both primary sources and published historical studies. While they deal primarily with a general history of the Chautauqua Movement, the books contain information about the authors' time working with Chautauqua. Seeking out primary sources and original documents in addition to historical studies is an important part of the historical research process. These sources enable the researcher the opportunity to draw their own conclusions or support the things they read in published historical studies. For this investigation, firsthand or primary sources included personal recollections and memoirs, event programs, photographs, and textbooks.

Reading the personal recollections of Chautauqua performers provided important details about Chautauqua meetings. The Harry Ransom Center (HRC) at The University of Texas at Austin has two Chautauqua performer memoirs in its collection. One is orator Gay MacLaren's (1938) cleverly titled *Morally We Roll Along*, which covers his experience attending a Chautauqua meeting in his youth, through his training and life as an adult traveling with the circuit Chautauquas. The other Chautauqua memoir in the collection of the HRC is *Recollections of the Lyceum and Chautauqua Circuits* by Irene Briggs and Raymond F. DaBoll (1969). The book contains a conversation between the authors about Briggs's days as a Chautauqua musician along with many pictures and a general history of the Chautauqua Movement. One unique touch to this book is that it is hand written in calligraphy by DaBoll, because the art of "scribal writing" and Chautauqua suffered a similar fate when they were both driven out by technology (p. vii).

Studying the event programs from Chautauqua assemblies was an important component of my research. I found several event programs from Texas Chautauquas at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at The University of Texas. These programs contain the schedule for the assemblies as well as images and information about the performances and other offerings. The years covered by the programs include the days of the independent Chautauqua in late nineteenth century through the height of the circuits in the 1920s. Comparing the look, style, and text of the programs gave me insight into local assemblies that I could have found in a book. The event programs varied in size, thickness, and even layout. For example, one of the later circuit programs unfolded into a newspaper or poster-like design instead of the simple, traditional booklet

of pages that I found in the other programs I examined (Ellison-White Chautauqua, 1921).

Photographs provide researchers with visual evidence of people, places, and activities. The Chautauqua Institute's Online Archive allows people a look at photographs and other historical documents from the original Chautauqua site in New York from the early years in the late nineteenth century through more recent Chautauqua events that took place on the grounds. The photographs examined in this study included groups of students in art studios and class meetings.

Studying some of the textbooks associated with Chautauqua's classes and at-home offerings gave me a chance to look at the same information as students of Chautauqua. One of the most useful textbooks for this study was a handbook for the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk titled *The Home Teacher*, which has lesson plans and instructions designed to accompany the scrolls on the desk (Anonymous, 1903). Another significant textbook for this study was *The Photographic Instructor: For the Professional and Amateur (2nd ed.)* by W.I. Lincoln Adams (1890). It was the textbook issued to students taking a photography course offered by Chautauqua at the original site during the summer, in New York City fall through spring, and by correspondence throughout the year.

The CLSC played an important role in continuing the Chautauqua experience at-home for many people. Looking at the required reading lists and a few of the assigned books from that list was a useful tool for this study. Arthur Bestor, whose father was president of the Chautauqua Institute in New York, created *Chautauqua Publications: An*

*Historical and Bibliographical Guide* in 1934. It includes the complete reading lists for the CLSC up to 1934 and begins with a brief history of Chautauqua. Examining some of the textbooks from the reading list including *How to Judge of a Picture* written by John C. Van Dyke (1889) and *The Message of Greek Art* by H.H. Powers (1913) also provided insight into the experience of CLSC students.

## CONCLUSION

When conducting a study on an historical subject many types of sources should be consulted. This purpose of this chapter was to establish a foundation of literature and other sources that contributed to this study. This investigation took place through the use of sources dealing with historical research and local history, the history of art education, general sources on the history of the Chautauqua Movement, and primary sources and original documents related to the Chautauqua Movement. The following chapters examine and interpret the information found in these sources to present a focused historical look at the Chautauqua Movement and art education in the Chautauqua Movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

# Chapter 3: History of the Chautauqua Movement

## Purpose of the Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the primary ideas and historical motivation for the various features of the Chautauqua Movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This information is given to provide a brief background and foundational context for understanding the intended purposes for Chautauquas in the United States, as well as recognizing some of those who were the leaders of this education and entertainment movement.

## Introduction to the Chautauqua Movement

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Chautauqua Movement swept across the United States bringing educational opportunities to rural communities. The Chautauqua Movement influenced the shape of informal education and self-education by providing a place for people to gain knowledge in a camp meeting style assembly that was outside the traditional school setting. Many people living in rural communities during this time did not have access to broader forms of education because of both their monetary situation and physical location far removed from major cities. A Chautauqua meeting gave them access to more educational opportunities without the travel or expense attached to a university education. This legacy lives on in programs like lecture series hosted by museums and universities, Elderhostel programs providing both

leisure and educational opportunities to travelers, and extension or informal courses offered by many universities outside the regular academic schedule.

The first Chautauqua meeting and the later movement were named after Lake Chautauqua in western New York, where the first meeting was held. The name Chautauqua has an interesting origin separate from the educational meeting we associate with it today. Vincent (1886) and Morrison (1974) list several different origins and interpretations for the name of Lake Chautauqua. One meaning is "place of easy death," after a legend that a girl ate a thirst-provoking root by the lakeshore, bent down to take a drink, and was never seen again. Another interpretation is "pack tied in the middle," or "two moccasins tied together," which refers to the physical shape of the lake. Lake Chautauqua is narrow in the middle and resembles a slender pack tied in the middle or two moccasins tied together heel to heel or toe to toe. A third interpretation comes from a legend about a fish. The story goes that a group of Senecas caught a fish in the lake that they had never seen before. When they returned to Lake Erie with their catch, it was still alive in their canoe. They threw the fish overboard and after some time more fish of the same species appeared plentifully. This story supports the interpretation that the word "Chautauqua" comes from two Seneca words meaning "fish" and "taken out" (Morrison, 1974, p. 8).

A Chautauqua meeting consisted of lectures and performances on a variety of topics designed to deliver education, culture, and the arts to small towns. Topics varied by location but often included lectures on historical events or people, performances by a musical ensemble, and a theatrical production of a play or opera. These meetings lasted

between one week and one month usually in the summer. DeBrecht (2011) writes that the history of Chautauqua meetings can be divided into three stages: the first meeting held near Lake Chautauqua in New York, the independent Chautauquas, and the circuit Chautauquas. A fourth and equally important component of the Chautauqua Movement is the development of programs for study at home, which existed separately from the timeline of the three stages of Chautauqua assemblies.

## ORIGINS OF THE CHAUTAUQUA MOVEMENT AND THE FIRST ASSEMBLY

The Chautauqua idea, which formed the foundation of the Chautauqua movement, was the belief that education should be available to everyone regardless of economic background. DeBrecht (2011) writes that the Chautauqua idea and subsequent movement were influenced by popular and adult education practices, which were rooted in the self-improvement ideology that gained popularity in the nineteenth century. This included programs like the lyceum movement and reading circles that date as far back as the eighteenth century.

The first lyceum course was held in the northeastern United States in 1826. The name lyceum comes from an ancient Greek reference to the garden of the Temple of Apollo Lyceus where Aristotle once taught (Tapia, 1997). Much like the later Chautauquas, the main methods of instruction for a lyceum were lectures and demonstrations. Lyceums were held in small towns with populations of less than 1500. They never flourished in the South before the Civil War, because wealthy plantation owners did not want to upset the social structure by introducing this form of community

education. Tapia (1997) writes that the success of lyceums in the northeast was due in part to the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, which led to an increase in transportation possibilities and population as commercial industries grew around the canal. By 1840, there were 1000 active lyceum groups in the northeast.

After the Civil War, commercial lyceum booking agencies began to organize performers to bring entertainment to small towns. These agencies provided entertainment for social clubs, lyceum and opera houses, and independent or community Chautauqua meetings. By the early twentieth century, most lyceums were replaced by or joined forces with Chautauquas. The Redpath Lyceum Bureau, founded in 1868, expanded to include Chautauquas in 1903 and became one of the largest and most successful circuit Chautauqua organizers (Tapia, 1997).

John H. Vincent, a Methodist minister, and Lewis Miller, a businessman, founded the first Chautauqua meeting and subsequent movement. Their backgrounds reveal that although they had different professions, both men were interested in education and in particular the training of Sunday School teachers.

John H. Vincent was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama on February 23, 1832. His father worked as a merchant and moved the family to Northumberland County in Pennsylvania in about 1837 (Morrison, 1974). By the time he was fifteen, Vincent was teaching in public school and at sixteen he was licensed as a local preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church. After his mother's death around this time, he was sent to live with relatives in Newark, New Jersey (Hurlbut, 1921). Although Vincent had an

eagerness for learning, he was unable to pursue a formal college education. Hurlbut (1921) states that this loss in Vincent's youth became the nation's gain in his later years.

Vincent moved to Chicago and in 1865 established the "Sunday School Quarterly," a publication that later became the "Sunday School Teacher." Here he was able to set a new standard for Sunday School instruction with editorials and lessons. Soon he was called to New York to become the first General Agent of the Sunday School Union, which directed the Methodist Episcopal Sunday Schools throughout the world. He established a Normal Class that marked out a course of instruction for Sunday School teachers. He envisioned a group of teacher-students studying together daily for two weeks with lectures on inspiring themes with just a hint of entertainment to give the meeting some variety. This idea was an important precursor to the creation of the Chautauqua Assembly.

Lewis Miller was born on July 24, 1829, in Greentown, Ohio to a farming family. By the age of sixteen he was also working as a schoolteacher. Miller did not take to the farming lifestyle and began working at a plaster company while attending school. Later he became a partner in a manufacturing firm called Aultman, Ball, and Co., which soon became Aultman, Miller, and Co. In about 1857, he invented the Buckeye Mower and Reaper, which brought him fame and fortune (Hurlbut, 1921). After his success in business, Miller moved to Akron where he would eventually make the acquaintance of a remarkable minister named John Vincent. He became Sunday School Superintendent of the First Methodist Episcopal Church. Miller also worked to organize training sessions

for Sunday School teachers in an effort to make Sunday School educational and not just a meeting for children.

Vincent and Lewis met in 1868, while Vincent was working out a plan for Sunday School training classes in various places. The two became friends and remained collaborators until Lewis's death in 1899. Their shared interest in Sunday School education led Vincent to share his vision of a summer training session with Lewis, who suggested the picturesque Lake Chautauqua for the setting of the training. Lake Chautauqua hosted a few religious camp meetings in the years preceding Vincent and Lewis's first Sunday School training session in 1874. Vincent envisioned a place where "education, once the peculiar privilege of the few, must … become the valued possession of the many" (Vincent, 1886, p. 2). Only six years after their initial meeting, the two friends organized the first Chautauqua assembly and started a movement that would influence the landscape of informal education in America for years to come.

The first Chautauqua meeting was held in August 1874, as a training session for Sunday School teachers and was called The Chautauqua Sunday-School Assembly. Lewis served as the Chairman of this first assembly, because of his business experience, and Vincent was in charge of the Department of Instruction. The meeting lasted two weeks and included lessons, sermons, and devotional meetings with the Christian Bible serving as the textbook. Bible study and Christian lessons were important parts of the first meeting, but they were not the only items on the agenda. There were also concerts, fireworks, and a humorous lecture or two (Vincent, 1886). From the very beginning,

Chautauqua meetings sought to educate as well as entertain its audience, just as Vincent envisioned.

With his access of the monthly circular "The Sunday-School Journal" and other similar publications, Vincent promoted the assembly tirelessly through the winter. Simpson (1999) writes that by the end of the two-week meeting, between ten and fifteen thousand people from twenty-five states and a handful of foreign countries attended the training session. The first Chautauqua meeting was such a success that Lewis and Vincent decided to organize it again the following summer. This turned out to be an even grander success. In the summer of 1875, Vincent invited his old friend and parishioner Ulysses S. Grant, who was now president of the United States, to visit the grounds. Grant arrived on August 14, 1875, and a crowd of thirty thousand people showed up that day and the next to see the president (Simpson, 1999).

### INDEPENDENT CHAUTAUQUA ASSEMBLIES

Within a decade after the original Chautauqua meeting, independent or community-based Chautauqua assemblies started to pop up throughout the country. DeBrecht (2011) states that the independent Chautauquas receive the least amount of attention of the three stages and are often overlooked completely. They are overshadowed by the fame of the original New York Chautauqua and the flashier circuit Chautauquas. Independent Chautauquas also primarily took place in small, rural towns and lasted for a relatively brief time, which explains the lack of written information currently available about them. This does not mean they were unpopular or not well attended. People flocked

to these events looking for vacation and leisure experiences that were productive. The influence of popular religious and moralist groups like the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) added to people's belief in the old saying, "idle hands are the devil's workshop." Therefore, a truly moral person would spend their leisure time or take a vacation where they could be active and learn instead of wasting time relaxing in a mountain retreat or lying on the beach soaking up the sun. Independent Chautauquas provided a leisure opportunity where a person could experience a vacation free from the evils associated with leisure, such as alcohol and gambling.

Independent Chautauqua planning assemblies were composed of local leaders interested in bringing the Chautauqua idea to their towns. One such place was the small town of San Marcos, Texas located about thirty miles south of Austin. San Marcos hosted the first Chautauqua meeting in Texas in 1885, followed in 1889 by a Chautauqua held in Georgetown, a northern suburb of Austin. The San Marcos Chautauqua organizers wanted to create a "system of out-door instruction and amusement as exhibited at Chautauqua, and on a similar plan, with such made modifications, as our circumstances may require" (Henderson, 1938, pp. 4-5). These assemblies had no formal connection to the original Chautauqua or its founders, but adopted their ideas and adapted them. Independent Chautauqua meetings included educational programs in addition to Christian religious aspects like church services on Sundays and Bible study. Much like the original site, Independent Chautauqua meetings were often held near lakes and other picturesque locations. The idea of having a Chautauqua event in San Marcos was championed by

Reverend Horace Dubose. After visiting the original site in New York, Dubose came back to Texas in search of a picturesque setting for a local Chautauqua. He chose a spot on top of Woods Hill, later renamed Chautauqua Hill, because of its scenic views of the landscape.

Independent Chautauquas depended on the local people for support and funding. For example, there were several meetings held in San Marcos for the townspeople to discuss the Chautauqua. Funding came from several sources including wealthy individuals, fundraisers such as an oyster supper, and the sale of shares or subscriptions that included membership and voting rights in the local assembly (Henderson, 1938). Independent Chautauquas also received support from local organizations like the WTCU and the YMCA. These organizations played a role in the planning and fundraising aspects of the San Marcos Chautauqua, as well as the programs held at the actual meeting. Members of the WTCU gave lectures on the cause of temperance and had an entire day of their own at the 1887 meeting.

After experiencing success many Independent Chautauqua Assemblies built pavilions or tabernacles to house the large audiences that came to the lectures. The San Marcos Chautauqua Assembly built a tabernacle for the second year that could seat up to eight hundred attendees. Unfortunately, most of these structures no longer exist. After its final meeting in 1895, the San Marcos Chautauqua tabernacle was replaced by the Southwest Texas State Normal School in 1899. The new institute of higher education's purpose was to educate teachers, much like what occurred in the original New York Chautauqua. The building erected in place of the tabernacle still stands today at what is

now Texas State University (Texas State University – San Marcos, n.d.). A Chautauqua structure still stands in Waxahachie, Texas located about 30 miles south of Dallas. The Waxahachie Chautauqua Preservation Society repaired the Chautauqua Auditorium in the 1970s, and beginning in 2000 hosts modern Chautauqua events based around a different theme every fall (Waxahachie Chautauqua Preservation Society, n.d.).

Interest in Independent Chautauquas declined towards the turn of the twentieth century. Aron (1999) writes that although the idea of education for self-improvement for members of local communities was still present, it was weakening. This may have been simply due to the passage of time and the desire for new experiences and ideas. Many local assemblies could not financially support an annual meeting. Chautauquas were also competing with other summer resorts that offered fun and relaxing vacations, which were becoming increasingly more popular and acceptable. These changes created a need for a more entertaining and fun experience in leisure activities, which gave rise to the final phase of the Chautauqua Movement known as the circuit Chautauquas.

### CIRCUIT CHAUTAUQUA ASSEMBLIES

Circuit Chautauquas are the most well known type of Chautauqua, but they are also the farthest removed from John H. Vincent's original vision and plan. Circuit Chautauquas maintained some of the ideals of the original Chautauqua by including a few educational programs, but they focused more and more on pure entertainment as the years passed, to help ensure they attracted an audience and earned a profit. These events are called circuits because many of the companies that performed in these events traveled

from town to town, following a prescribed circuit of movement. Circuit Chautauquas are also referred to as tent Chautauquas because organizers of the events used tents that could easily travel with the performers, instead of using permanent structures like those found in the earlier independent Chautauquas.

In 1900, Keith Vawter, an agent for the Redpath Lyceum Bureau, began researching independent Chautauquas. He discovered that the organizers of these gatherings were not communicating with each other or working together to book speakers or other acts (Tapia, 1997). Over the next three years, Vawter created a proposal that would allow the Redpath Lyceum Bureau to offer a standard program to several towns close together. This saved the company travel expenses and offered better talent for Chautauquas at a reasonable price. In 1903, Vawter teamed up with Roy J. Ellison to create the Standard Redpath Chautauqua in cooperation with the Redpath Lyceum Bureau. In addition to offering a standard program, the collaborative team shortened the length of a typical Chautauqua from several weeks or a month to just seven days. Vawter and Ellison offered their first circuit Chautauqua program the following year.

Several other booking agencies enjoyed success with the circuits. These included the Ellison-White Chautauqua Bureau, which was founded by Vawter's former partner. By 1914, the circuits had replaced most of the independent Chautauquas because of their lower cost. Tapia (1997) writes that the biggest year for circuit Chautauquas was 1924, when they were held in 10,000 communities and an estimated 40,000,000 people attended nationwide. Beginning in 1915, the Redpath Bureau and the Ellison-White Bureau offered Chautauqua programs to English-speaking towns in Canada and Mexico.

The Ellison-White Bureau also offered programs overseas to Australia in 1917, followed by New Zealand and Tahiti in 1918. The overseas programs were not as financially successful as those in the United States and were abandoned after 1918. The programs in rural Canada and Mexico continued into the 1940s but were no longer sponsored by American companies (Tapia, 1997).

Although they kept the familiar Chautauqua name, circuits differed from the original New York Chautauqua and independent Chautauquas in both appearance and content. Chautauquas experienced increased competition from vacation resorts, traveling circuses, and mobile theatre companies. Canning (2005) writes that Chautauquas also had to adapt to changes in America during the height of its popularity from roughly 1870 to 1930. These changes included the composition of citizenry, national identity, political practices, and the nation's relationship to the rest of the world. During the time of the circuits from 1904 to about 1930, the United States fought in World War I, gave women the right to vote, saw large numbers of people immigrate from all over the world through Ellis Island, and passed a law prohibiting alcohol only to repeal it thirteen years later. Chautauquas, especially circuit Chautauquas with their standard program, provided a shared cultural experience that linked people across the changing nation. The absence of a national media outlet, until radio appeared in the 1920s, positioned Chautauqua as one of the few ubiquitous experiences in America.

The changes in Chautauqua's appearance included aspects to emphasize its moral standing and advertise its entertainment value. The tents used for circuits were made of brown canvas to distinguish them from their competitors. While Chautauquas, especially

circuit Chautauquas, wanted to be seen as entertaining, they still desired to be regarded as moral in their purpose. The strolling entertainers, who were scorned by the church leaders in the small towns where Chautauqas were held, used white tents. The inside of the Chautauqua tents resembled a lecture hall more than an opera hall. They had wooden benches that formed rows facing a small stage. They did not have the multiple stages or rings used by the circus, which featured flashy performances involving animals and occasionally large productions like military reenactments. Chautauquas could not compete with these elaborate displays of showmanship and they did not desire to so. The flashy performances put on by circuses were seen as superficial when compared to the offerings of Chautauquas. The event programs at circuit Chautauquas provided a place where they could compete, while remaining morally sound. Circuit programs expanded from the simple schedule of events and handful of photographs found in earlier programs, to include more photographs of lecturers and performers, illustrations, and even an occasional splash of color in the design. (Figure 1, Figure 2)

The content of a Chautauqua also changed during this time, presenting booking agencies with the difficult task of balancing entertainment with the moral aspects people had grown to expect and count on from a Chautauqua. The events had to be entertaining enough to draw a large crowd, but moral enough to continue the Chautauqua tradition and gain the support of the local churches. Advertisements and event programs boasted that they had hit plays alongside a few educational lectures. The event program from a 1929 Chautauqua held in Cuero, Texas about 90 miles east of San Antonio, boasts that it had “entertaining speakers” and “captivating music” (pp. 3, 5). At the end of the program,

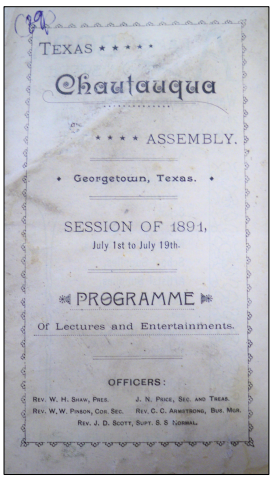


Figure 1: Cover of an independent Chautauqua program. Texas Chautauqua Assembly. (1891). Georgetown Chautauqua, July 1 – 19, 1891 [event program]. Georgetown, TX. Texas Library Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.


Figure 2: Cover of a circuit Chautauqua program. Ellison-White Chautauquas. (1921). Chautauqua: 7 big days, Cuero, April 12-18 [event program]. Cuero, TX. Texas Library Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

it evens asks, “Do you have any fun?” with an answer that describes the “genuine good time” and lasting memories one could expect from a Chautauqua (Ellison-White Chautauqua, 1929, p. 6).

Chautauqua programs for children also changed in the circuits. In the independent Chautauquas, youth programs usually consisted of a story hour, Bible lessons, and a performance or pageant put on by the children. In an effort to keep up with the changing times and immigration rates during the early twentieth century, youth programs in the circuits were expanded to include lessons on citizenship and government, complete with mock elections (Ellison-White, 1929). They also changed the name from Youth Chautauqua to Junior Chautauqua to convey the importance of the new lessons.

There are many factors that led to the decline of Chautauquas but they can be summed up with one phrase as Canning (2005) put it: “The world had most assuredly changed, and Chautauqua had not been able to change with it” (p. 221). Although Chautauqua was able to adapt to changes before, it was no longer able to keep up with a shifting world. There were changes in transportation, popular entertainment, and public thought that outpaced Chautauqua.

Audiences were no longer dependent upon entertainment coming to them via railroads or traveling programs, thanks to the invention and availability of the personal automobile. With the invention of the Model T by the Ford Company in 1908, people could now jump into their cars and drive greater distances in a few hours than their grandparents were able to do in a few days (Canning, 2005). By 1925, the price of an automobile had decreased by more than half, giving a larger group of people access to an

automobile and the freedom of travel it provided. The automobile also changed the structure of rural life. Many of the small, rural towns that held Chautauquas were growing into suburbs with easier access to larger cities, virtually eliminating the need or desire for programs like Chautauqua.

Changes in the entertainment field, such as the rise of radio and sophistication in motion pictures were too much for Chautauquas to compete with. People could now receive news and other information within their homes through radio broadcasts. Movie theatres now provided another place to be entertained. Indoor movie theatres were often more comfortable than the canvas tent surroundings with simple wooden benches found at circuit Chautauquas. The invention and distribution of "talkies" in the late 1920s drew audiences to movie theatres and away from live theatrical productions like those found at Chautauquas. Radio and movies provided a shared cultural experience for Americans, making Chautauquas seem old-fashioned when compared with the new and exciting technology of popular entertainment in the 1920s and '30s.

A change in public thought and attitude also contributed to the waning of Chautauquas. Like many other trends, Chautauquas started to fall out of favor simply to due to the passage of time and desire for something new. Canning (2005) describes one change in public thought as the loss of the democratic ethos of Chautauqua that prided itself on providing educational opportunities to everyone. Often better educated than their parents, the new generation of Americans were not interested in being lectured to as part of a large audience of several hundred people. Instead, they longed to be a part of exclusive social groups like country clubs and bridge clubs.

Changes in labor laws in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries gave people, especially the growing middle class, more leisure time as a result of shorter workweeks. Chautauquas showed people how to use that time and over the years created an appetite for more fun and exciting leisure activities that eventually led to its decline. There are a few sites that survived the decline of Chautauquas or have been recently revived, including the original site near Lake Chautauqua in New York, one in the small town of Waxahachie, Texas, and another in the college town of Boulder, Colorado.

### CHAUTAUQUA AT-HOME

In addition to public meetings, the Chautauqua Movement gave people the opportunity to learn from the comfort of their homes. One such opportunity was the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC). The CLSC was an individual, at-home reading course that covered several different subjects each year. Another at-home learning opportunity was the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk, which was specifically designed for children.

In his guide to Chautauqua publications, Bestor (1934) states that the CLSC had the widest influence of any Chautauqua activities. The influence of the CLSC can still be seen today in extension courses offered by universities and book clubs. In developing the CLSC, Vincent was inspired by the fact that he was unable to obtain a formal university education and wanted to give people like him the chance to gain a similar educational experience. In addition to the intellectual benefits of the CLSC, Vincent hoped that it would provide students, who met regularly with their reading circles, with what he saw as

a few essential parts of the university experience. He hoped they would develop a sense of pride in their alma mater, foster lasting friendships, and feel that they were part of an important institution (Vincent, 1886). After completing four years of CLSC reading, students were awarded certificates at the local Chautauqua meeting on Recognition Day, much like the four years a student would spend at a university followed by a diploma and graduation ceremony.

Vincent formally organized the CLSC and announced it on August 10, 1878, during a summer Chautauqua at the original New York site. The CLSC is sometimes referred to as "the Circle," and was intended for advanced Chautauquans who wanted more from their Chautauqua experience. Vincent (1886) writes that the aim of the organization was to

> promote reading and study in nature, art, science, and in secular and sacred literature, in connection with the routine of daily life (especially among those whose educational advantages have been limited), so as to secure to them the college student's outlook upon the world and life, and to develop the habit of close, connected, persistent thinking. (p. 75)

The first book chosen for the reading list by Vincent himself was J. R. Green's (1878) *A Short History of the English People*. Hurlbut (1921) remembers that the book quickly flew off shelves after Vincent's announcement, and prompted daily telegrams to Harper Brothers in New York for additional copies. The Harpers were astounded by the sudden increase in demand for this book and telegraphed back asking for an explanation. Public libraries were still scarce at this time and people often had to wait a month or more before being able to purchase or borrow a copy of Green's book In the third year of the CLSC, a monthly magazine called "The Chautauquan," was founded that published monthly

information on CLSC matters and original articles that formed part of the reading list. Simpson (1999) writes that Vincent determined by 1891 that 180,000 people enrolled in the program, but only about twelve percent completed the entire four-year course.

Chautauqua's at-home learning opportunities were not only for adults. The Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk was an important part of the Chautauqua Movement that provided children the chance to learn from home. Pinto and Smith (1999) describe the Art Desk as "a computer without electricity" (p. 19). The desk offered a variety of lessons and complex activities, much like the involvement a child may have with a computer today. According to *The Home Teacher,* a handbook for the desk, "What the assembly and reading circle is doing for the 'grown-ups' the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk and Home Teacher are doing for little folks" (Anonymous, 1913, p. 64). This text appropriately accompanies a picture of Lake Chautauqua, the scenic site of the first Chautauqua assembly.

The desk was designed like a secretary desk and could be hung on the wall with the writing surface folding up for storage. There were also scrolls that could be changed for different lessons and a handbook for parents or teachers. *The Home Teacher* had lessons on important skills of early twentieth century including drawing, telegraphy, shorthand, and bookkeeping. Korzenik (1985) states that the Art Desk was evidence of the growing trend in America to place education in the hands of parents and "embodies the growing rivalry between home and school as educational institutions" (pp. 127 – 128). The desk left lasting impressions on young learners and, according to praise found in the back of *The Home Teacher*, was well worth the cost. One person stated, in support

of the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk: “It will form an early taste for drawing and thus enable pupils to pass their entrance examinations to the High School much more easily,” and another described the desk as, “the best thing I ever saw for keeping children off the streets” (Anonymous, 1903, p. 86).

## CONCLUSION

The Chautauqua Movement brought cultural education and entertainment to people in small towns across the United States, with the democratic idea of providing educational opportunities to everyone in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Chautauqua Movement is divided into three phases of public meetings: the original Chautauqua site in rural New York, the independent Chautauqua assemblies, and the circuit Chautauqua assemblies. There were also programs that provided at-home learning opportunities for Chautauquans, such as the CLSC and the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk. The following chapter will explore the arts programs associated the three phases of Chautauqua meetings and the at-home programs.

# Chapter 4: Arts Education in the Chautauqua Movement

The arts played an important role in the Chautauqua Movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These programs helped shape modern informal arts education by providing more opportunities for people to gain knowledge outside of school through informal education and self-education. Programs like summer concert series, traveling musicals and theatre productions, and children's activity desks are built upon the traditions of the Chautauqua Movement.

Arts knowledge in the nineteenth century was often limited to those who lived in or could travel to large cities, or those who could afford a university education. The museums, galleries, and performance halls located in larger cities gave people access to arts knowledge. Universities provided classes and other learning opportunities in the arts that were not available elsewhere. The programs associated with the Chautauqua Movement gave an increased number of people access to this knowledge, which had previously been available only to a privileged, few people.

In order to discuss the arts programs at Chautauqua, the term "arts" needs to be defined as it used for the purposes of this study. In the introduction to the highly recognized art history textbook *Gardner's Art through the Ages*, art is defined as

> visual and tangible objects made by human hands. These can be classified under architecture, sculpture, the pictorial arts (painting, drawing, printmaking, photography), and the craft arts, or arts of design, which produce objects of utility, like ceramic wares, metal wares, textiles, and similar accessories of ordinary living. (Tansey & Kleiner, 1996, p. 3)

Although this definition includes elements that are sometimes left out of more traditional definitions of art, like crafts and design, it applies only to visual art. However, other art mediums also played an important role in the Chautauqua Movement and should be considered under the umbrella of "the arts." A broader, more inclusive definition of the arts describes them as products of creative, human expression. This expanded definition includes other forms of artistic expression, commonly referred to as performing arts, such as music, theatre, and dance. Music and theatre played a large role in the arts education at the Chautauqua meetings. Although dance is an important feature of arts education, there is little evidence available at this time about dance performances in the Chautauqua Movement. For the purpose of this study, the term "arts" will embrace the visual arts, music, and theatre.

The goal of the Chautauqua Movement was to bring cultural experience and education to small towns and rural areas. Culture for Chautauqua usually meant the arts, which sometimes were difficult to separate into individual experiences. Chautauqua events hosted arts programs including lectures and classes related to visual arts, musical ensembles and singers, and plays and operas.

### VISUAL ARTS

The role of the visual arts in the Chautauqua Movement is often overlooked in studies of the Chautauqua Movement. Much of the research on performances at the Chautauqua assemblies, especially the circuits, is focused on music and theatre. Unlike other arts mediums, visual arts could be experienced in-person at Chautauqua meetings

and at-home in books. Music and theatre programs existed mainly at the assemblies, because performance is an important component of both art forms and books could not do them justice. Therefore, it was important for Chautauquas to include music and theatre programs in the assemblies because rural citizens would have little access to such performances elsewhere. Visual arts education in Chautauqua included lectures and demonstrations at the assemblies, in-person classes, as well as at-home programs like reading and correspondence classes and work with the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk.

The most well-known visual art lectures from the Chautauqua Movement were the chalk talks. Chalk talks involved lectures or casual talks given to an audience while the presenter drew a quick picture or sketch on their easel. Often as a talk or lecture came to a close, the drawing was turned upside down after completion to reveal a surprising new image. These lectures were very popular for both adult and children's programs. While these lectures are not formal instruction in visual art practices or techniques, they do use the power of drawing to both educate and entertain their audiences.

Harrison and Detzer (1958) state that Chautauqua sent "great artists" and "poor scrawlers" around the circuits to work as chalk talkers and that the scrawlers were more popular (p. 63). They explain that as a rule artists are good with brushes, crayons, and clay, and are therefore not always particularly articulate in their conversations. Chautauqua audiences preferred a "good lively talk with inferior art, to great art accompanied by a dull speech" (Harrison and Detzer, 1958, p. 63). Frank Beard was a popular chalk talker who was an accomplished speaker and artist. Before appearing at Chautauqua, Beard worked as a cartoonist during the Civil War. Chautauqua performer

MacLaren (1938) remembered, as a young man, seeing Beard perform at a Chautauqua. He stated that Beard had large easel with big squares of paper and drew pictures with colored chalk while he talked. After completing his drawings, Beard threw them into the audience to take as souvenirs. When they fought over drawings like those depicting Abraham Lincoln or George Washington, Beard warned that he would stop giving them to the audience if they were going to fight.

Sculptor Lorado Taft also gave lecture demonstrations at Chautauqua meetings. MacLaren (1938) describes his performance saying, that Taft "reproduced his studio on the platform and led his audience through the intricate process of creating a work of art in plaster" (p. 145). Taft was able to change the features on his sculpture's face with only a few touches, which delighted audiences. Taft said that in giving his lectures he hoped to awaken public interest in having community art galleries and maybe even inspire young people to become sculptors (MacLaren, 1938). In keeping with the tradition of morality in early Chautauquas, the message people took away from Taft's lectures was that if they were not right on the inside, it would show on the outside. Another artist named Smith Damron gave lectures using his potter's wheel to make vases and pots on the platform, but his work did not have as strong a moral message as did the efforts of Taft. When asked by Chautauqua organizers to adjust his lectures to fit with other Sunday offerings, Damron came up with an improvised lesson. He told the young people that if they smoked cigarettes, they would "never grow up to be potters and make beautiful vases" (MacLaren, 1938, p. 150).

Chautauquas featured lectures on various aspects of art and design, including interior design. The Chautauqua in Cuero, Texas in 1921, hosted a lecture by Hunt Cook from the Art Institute of Chicago, titled "Art in the Home." The event program goes on to refer to him as an authority on interior decoration and describes the lecture as "painting pictures with furniture… to achieve artistic results with decoration and furniture arrangement" (Ellison-White Chautauqua, 1921, p. 7). Ross Crane was another interior design lecturer. His mission was to "get a splash of color into American homes" (MacLaren, 1938, p. 150). Crane traveled with a trunk full of brightly colored draperies and chair coverings. He borrowed furniture from a local dealer and decorated a room on the platform during his lecture.

Another popular visual art subject that was a part of Chautauqua lectures was picture study, the study or "appreciation" of famous works of art consisting mainly of paintings through reproductions. Smith (1986) writes that Oscar W. Neale, a major figure in the Picture Study Movement, lectured at Chautauqua assemblies. Neale felt that works of art had, "a moral, ethical, and sometimes patriotic function" (Smith, 1986, p. 52). This belief made Neale's lectures a good fit with Chautauqua's desire to be a place for moral education and entertainment.

The original Chautauqua site in western New York hosted arts and crafts classes for adults, in order to extend the Chautauqua experience. One of the subjects in high demand was a class on photography. An advertisement for the class in the back of a photography instruction book stated that the Chautauqua School of Photography offered practical instruction in the "art-science" of photography to every beginner and student

(Adams, 1890, p. xi). There were three ways a student could learn photography at Chautauqua. The first option was by direct personal instruction at the Chautauqua Assembly ground during the summer. The second option was to enroll in classes in New York City during fall, winter, and spring. Third option was correspondence classes with 24 printed lessons, prescribed home practice, required reading, and correspondence with an instructor. The instruction book given to students at the Chautauqua School of Photography was a comprehensive guide appropriately titled *The Photographic Instructor* by W.I.L. Adams (1890). It contained lessons on an abundance of topics ranging from the camera apparatus itself, to the many different chemicals used in the developing process, to how to make artistic prints.

There is photographic evidence of the classes at the Chautauqua Institute in New York, which show that these classes included traditional forms of visual art such as painting and drawing, and newer ones like photography. One photograph taken at the Chautauqua Institute shows a small group of students in a photography class practicing their skills outdoors in 1889 (Figure 3). There are six people visible in the photograph. Three of them have cameras set up in front of them, but are holding a flash or light to illuminate their subjects. Better lighting in nature led these students to the outdoors to practice their skills. It is also possible that another student in this class took the photograph, as this visual document shows both how students are learning photography and is an example of what instruction they received.

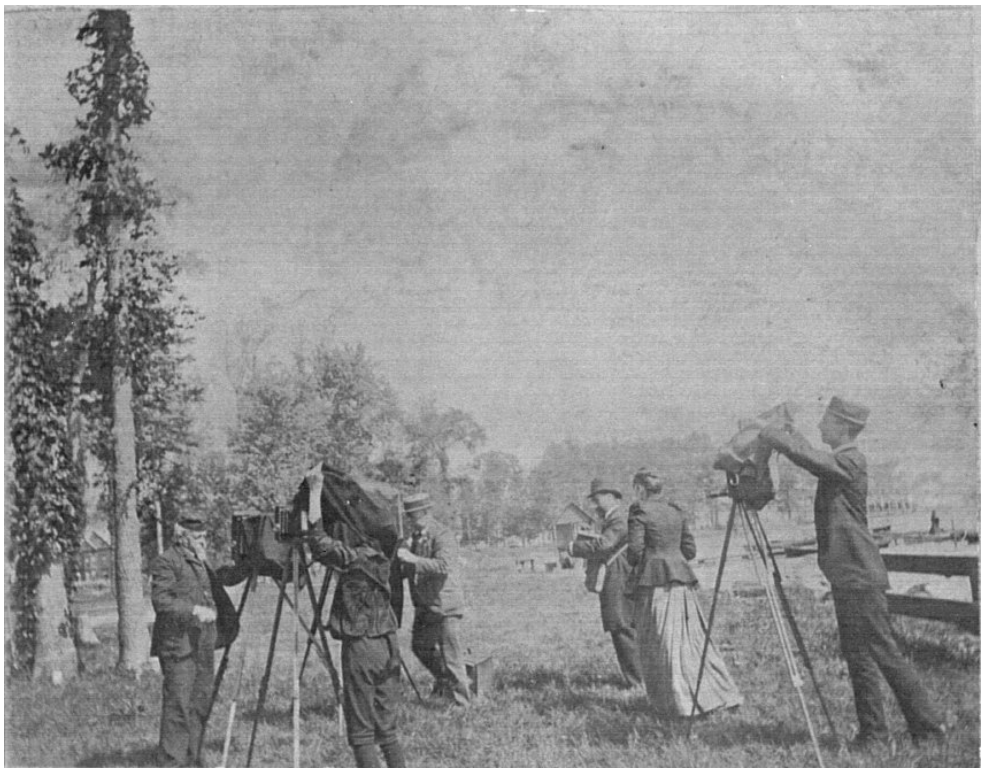

Figure 3: Dunkle, C.L. (1889). Photography Class. Photographic Collection. Chautauqua Institution Online Archive.

Two photographs reveal students inside art studios. One photograph depicts a group of female students in an art studio in 1904 (Figure 4). The students are seated at tables rather than easels, indicating they are working on three-dimensional art. The hammers and other tools located on the table indicate they are in a sculpture or pottery studio. Another photograph shows a group of female students in the ceramics studio in 1930 (Figure 5). There are four students in this group with three seated and one standing. The teacher is situated at the end of the table on the left speaking to the student next to her, while the other two students continue their work. The evidence of other art classes is

seen in the photograph, which means this was a multi-purpose studio. There are several ceramic figures displayed in the case towards the center of the image, and there are landscape and still-life paintings hanging on the wall in the background. These may provide examples and models for students to use in generating ideas for their own work.

Figure 4: Wertz, S.G. (1904). Arts & Crafts Village. Photographic Collection, Chautauqua Institution Online Archive.

Figure 5: Unknown. (1930). Ceramics class. Photographic Collection, Chautauqua Institution Online Archive.

Some independent Chautauquas also held classes separate from the lectures held at the assembly. The program for the 1890 Chautauqua in Georgetown, Texas listed a small number of classes hosted by the commercial department of the Chautauqua. There were classes available in freehand drawing and one on the "beautiful art" of penmanship (Texas Chautauqua Association, 1890, p. 14). A School of Art and Design offered extra courses during the Chautauqua of 1892 in San Marcos. The subjects covered included instruction in oil painting, watercolor, free hand drawing, "out sketching," and lectures on fine and decorative arts (Henderson, 1938, p. 270).

The visual arts were an important part of the at-home Chautauqua experience, where the performing arts were a more difficult subject to produce for home education. The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC) often included visual arts books in their annual reading lists. The reading lists, beginning with the CLSC's founding in 1878 through the decline of Chautauqua Assemblies in 1930, contain thirteen visual art books compared with only one volume about music and no publications about theatre or drama. Most of the visual art books included on the list contain subject matter about art history, and frequently dealt with from a specific time or country.

One of the CLSC books focused on art history was *The Message of Greek Art* by H.H. Powers (1913), which was assigned for the academic year 1912-1913. Greek art was the subject of several book titles situated on the CLSC reading lists. *The Message of Greek Art* includes one hundred and thirty-seven images to illustrate the subject, which would have been an impossible feat to cover in an afternoon lecture.

In the 1889-1890 academic year, the book *How to Judge of a Picture* was on the assigned reading list and was the only visual art book assigned between 1878 and 1930 that did not deal directly with a specific time or topic in art history. The book teaches the reader how to judge and assess the quality of a picture, mostly paintings, just as the title indicates. In the book's preface, the author John C. Van Dyke (1889) indicates that he felt compelled to write the book after being asked "to play pedagogue" to two young people discussing the unattractive faces in one painting and the why some art was considered great when it appeared only half finished (p. 3). The author explains that he wrote the book so that people who visited galleries could talk intelligently about what they saw,

and could differentiate the good pictures from the bad. The chapters include subjects such as color and harmony, perspective and atmosphere, composition, and style and individuality among other principles and elements of visual art.

The Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk, introduced in Chapter 3 of this study, provided a way for children to learn visual art, among other subjects, at home. The manual *The Home Teacher* that accompanied the Art Desk contained visual art lessons on drawing portraits, linear perspective, picture building, and color development. The drawing lessons start with lines and shapes, then move to how to make more detailed drawings of animals and portraits of people, and then invite the child to draw what they see in the world around them. Korzenik (1985) states that the series of Art Desk scroll lessons "represented a strange fusing of early copyist art education with more child-centered expressive notions" (p. 128). One later lesson in *The Home Teacher* on pencil drawing explains that, "real art is a translation or interpretation rather than imitation," and then instructs the child to copy the lines seen in landscape on the scroll accompanying the lesson while incorporating their own style or feelings (p. 55).

Pinto and Smith (1999) discuss the inclusion of picture study alongside technical drawings for machinery in the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk. This dual emphasis in the content suggests that the visual arts had not yet been split apart into the areas of fine arts and industrial arts, as they are often seen today. The expression associated with fine arts was not seen as completely separate from the technical aspects of mechanical drawing and plans. *The Home Teacher* states in the opening section about the value of drawing that "the training of the eye and hand has industrial as well as artistic meaning" (p. 5).

Later *The Home Teacher* explains that personal elements and expression are what make masterpieces of art.

While chalk talks, painting, drawing, ceramics, and photography classes, as well as art history books, helped satisfy the desire for education in the visual arts, Chautauquans' thirst for arts education did not stop there. Musical performances and music classes were another important component of arts education present in the Chautauqua Movement.

## MUSIC

Live music performances were an important part of almost every Chautauqua meeting. Music had long been associated with church services and therefore found a natural place in Chautauqua gatherings. While early Chautauquas had more modest and traditional performances often only associated with religious services or sermons, music eventually became a prominent feature of Chautauquas. Musical performances in a variety of sizes and styles flourished in the later circuit Chautauquas.

Morrison (1974) describes the story of music in the Chautauqua Movement as going from one bell stroke to an entire symphony. A single bell stroke opened the first Chautauqua meeting at the original site in New York in 1874 and became the first music note in a long line of Chautauqua performances and concerts. At the first assembly audiences sang hymns, heard choral performances, and listened to a band. During the second assembly, visitors were entertained by two bands near the lake, and participated in "praise services" conducted by William F. Sherman, who became Chautauqua's first

music director (Morrison, 1974, p. 120). In 1879, a Chautauqua School of Music was formally organized. In its first season, the School of Music offered twenty-two music classes and seven concerts. The topics of these first classes included singing lessons for children and lectures on the culture of musical taste.

The original Chautauqua site hosted several symphony performances including a few featuring the New York Symphony. In 1909, the New York Symphony was scheduled for a single concert. A baseball game was arranged the same night "for those who might not want to risk an undiluted symphony program" (Morrison, 1974, p. 128). One hour before the concert began there were an estimated eight thousand people on hand to hear the symphony. The New York Symphony returned again the following year, showing there was an appetite for symphonic performances at Chautauqua assemblies and leading the Chautauqua Institution to eventually create its own symphony. After 1910, the New York Symphony did not return to Chautauqua for nine years, but during their absence audiences heard from another symphony. In three seasons between 1915 and 1917, Chautauqua hosted the Russian Symphony. Unlike the New York Symphony, who played only one concert each season, the Russian Symphony performed a series of concerts.

When the New York Symphony returned in 1919, they played a series of twelve concerts and the next year they came back for a whole six weeks of programs (Morrison, 1974). In 1929, Chautauqua organized its own symphony under the direction of newly appointed Music Director Albert Stossel. The New York Symphony merged with the New York Philharmonic Society the previous year, thus prompting Chautauqua to create

a symphony of its own. The Chautauqua Symphony played an extensive repertoire ranging from Vivaldi to children's concerts. Sometimes, a choir accompanied the Chautauqua Symphony during performances.

Music in the independent Chautauquas played a smaller role than it would later in the circuits. It was most often associated with Sunday church services or as part of opening and closing ceremonies, but some Chautauquas included music in their regular program. In the early years, music was featured during special events and church services, but took a backseat to lectures most days.

For the San Marcos Chautauquas, a local choir was organized to perform during the summer session beginning with the first season in 1885. During the 1886 Chautauqua, a choir of sixty was organized through meetings at local churches. They performed every afternoon, but the evening was reserved for lectures and speeches. In 1891, daily exercises were interspersed with music by the Cincinnati Concert Party, who also played a grand concert one evening (Henderson, 1938). Although it often occupied a supporting role, vocal and instrumental music was an important part of the San Marcos Chautauquas until their end in 1895. During the final season, the performance of a "well trained orchestra" was described as one of the most pleasing features of the entire Chautauqua (Henderson, 1938, p. 314).

Some independent Chautauquas also organized music classes like those held on the grounds of the original New York Chautauqua. A Chautauqua held in Georgetown, Texas in 1890, included Schools of Music in addition to their regular lectures and programs. The Schools of Music provided classes to those who were interested in musical

activities. Some of the other schools and classes offered that year included a Sunday School Normal Institute, Teachers' Normal Institute, and a Commercial Department that provided lessons in freehand drawing, typewriting, shorthand, and book-keeping, among other vocational skills.

In the circuit Chautauquas, music played a much more prominent role than it had previously. Smaller ensembles of various styles eventually replaced the grand symphonies and orchestras. Featured musical performances were the evening entertainment in the circuits, as the educational lectures that had once been the focus of Chautauqua were beginning to fade away.

The expense and space required for transporting a large number of musicians from place to place made small groups better suited to circuit Chautauquas. Fewer musicians also meant that it cost promoters less salary expense, which made them even more appealing. Small ensembles provided the opportunity for diversity among the style of music. One circuit program could afford to include several different small ensembles that specialized in various types of music. Circuits always featured a variety of music but classical music and Sousa-type marches dominated the musical offerings in the early years of the circuits.

The wide range of musical acts offered during the circuits can be seen in some the Chautauquas held in Texas. An Ellison – White Chautauqua held in Cuero, Texas in 1921, hosted a variety of musical acts including the all-strings ensemble Lieurance's Little Symphony, a quartet of male singers from Los Angeles known as the Orpheus Four, a singer named Walter R. Jenkins, a ballad singer named Sam Lewis who traveled

with a group of three other performers, and the Jugo-Slav orchestra from Eastern Europe. This desire for variety brought an increasing number of foreign ensembles to the platform. Tapia (1997) writes that Chautauqua audiences were fascinated by foreign-born performers and enjoyed their music as long as it was presented in English. Some circuits experimented with performing in a foreign language, but quickly abandoned it.

Jubilee singers were a popular and enduring Chautauqua ensemble. There were several different groups of jubilee singers over the years, making them a staple of the circuit Chautauquas. They were groups made up of African Americans, who often sang traditional "plantation songs," or "slave hymns," which had previously only been sung in private (Canning, 2005, p. 83). One of the most prominent jubilee groups was the Fisk Jubilee Singers, who had been trained and educated at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. The Fisk Singers first became associated with Chautauqua in 1880 when John H. Vincent, Chautauqua co-founder, invited them to the New York Chautauqua Institute to take part in a political rally in support of James A. Garfield (Tapia, 1997).

The jubilee singers were sometimes met with animosity in the towns they visited. Some towns, even in the north, threatened to cancel the Chautauqua if a jubilee group performed. Canning (2005) writes that many people believed the moving and captivating performances of the singers would accomplish what years of social and political work had not been able achieve: full membership in the community of the United States.

World War I had an impact on many aspects of Chautauqua, although the programs do not seem to directly address the global conflict. After the United States entered World War I, music along with many of Chautauqua's other offerings,

experienced a surge of patriotism. Although Chautauqua performers were exempt from the draft, vaudeville and Broadway performers were not. This left a talent pool that was largely female. One group was known as the Pilgrim Girls before the war, but they were referred to as the Liberty Maids Quartet in 1918 and described in a promotional flier as wearing patriotic costumes (Tapia, 1997).

Although music is a largely auditory experience, it was not completely left out of the printed materials in Chautauqua's at-home programs. There was one book on the CLSC reading list between 1878 and 1930 that dealt with music, titled *Song and Legend from the Middle Ages* by William D. McClintock and Porter Lander McClintock (1893). There was also a lesson about music in *The Home Teacher* for the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk. The lesson begins by saying, "Every child should understand the first principles of music even though he may not have a special talent for it" (Anonymous, 1903, p. 10). The lesson discusses the basics of reading music, including treble and bass clef, sharps and flats, musical notes and rests, and changes in volume, like a crescendo.

With the increasing popularity of music in the circuits, promoters were able to enact more plays and operas, often using the same performers. Many traveling bands and ensembles supplied the music for theatrical productions. A talented singer could perform both with a musical ensemble and as part of an opera.

### THEATRE

Although theatre was one of the most popular attractions at the circuits, it was virtually nonexistent in the early years of Chautauqua. Gay MacLaren, a circuit

Chautauqua performer, wrote that early Chautauqua audiences were made up "almost exclusively of church people who were violently opposed to the theatre and everything connected with it" (MacLaren, 1938, p. 134). The theatre world, with its emphasis on entertainment, was not valued or appreciated by many churchgoers at the time. Theatre for Chautauqua included dramatic readings, plays, operas, impersonators, and puppet shows for the children. Theatre was not a part of Chautauqua's at-home offerings because it required aspects of performance that were not available away from the platform of the assembly meeting.

The widespread concern that theatre was purely entertaining and had no educational or moralizing value kept theatre out of the Chautauquas for many years. Theatre was on Vincent's "better not" list, even though many of his ideas were considered radically innovative for his time (Morrison, 1974, p. 156). Biblical episodes and dramatic readings from plays, which served as a loophole for those seeking theatrical entertainment, were presented in the 1880s. A dramatic reading consisted of a play edited down to about forty or fifty minutes and performed by a single dramatic artist. Dramatic readings were very popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and no Chautauqua program, especially in the early years, was complete without a reading or two (MacLaren, 1938). Over the years, attitudes about theatre relaxed and eventually theatre became a more prominent part of the Chautauqua experience. By 1910, a visiting company offered performances of Shakespeare plays. In 1929, Norton Hall opened at the original Chautauqua site in rural New York and replaced the makeshift playhouses with a permanent theatre.

Theatre was almost completely absent from independent Chautauquas except for a few small productions. Restrictions in cost and the question of theatre's moral value kept independents away from theatrical productions. There was a "terribly vivid and dramatic presentation" of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in the San Marcos, Texas Chautauqua of 1891 (Henderson, 1938, p. 249). The story's portrayal of the inner conflict between good and evil may have appealed to the churchgoing crowds that attended independent Chautauquas. This was most likely the reason Chautauqua organizers approved this story's inclusion in the assembly.

Theatre flourished in the circuit Chautauquas. The existence of vaudeville and Broadway gave theatre an increased presence in the lives of Americans and eventually helped it gain favor. The interest in more entertaining and fun leisure experiences also made theatrical productions more popular than traditional educational lectures at Chautauqua meetings.

Tapia (1997) writes that one circuit feature that helped transition audiences from dramatic readings to plays in the circuits was the travelogue lecture, which incorporated the art of a dramatic reading with moving glass slides. In the early years of the circuits, nickelodeons and short films were still novelties outside of large cities. The slides were projected through a magic lantern or vitascope device. The readings selected for a travelogue lecture were read in a dramatic way that created an emotional mood or made a point about the scene on the screen.

Children's programming in the circuits also included theatrical productions. The children often organized a pageant or performance of their own with the help of a

Chautauqua Girl, a teacher or guide for children's programs at Chautauqua gatherings. Children who attended the Austin, Texas Chautauqua in 1917 saw a performance called "The Wonderful Manikins" on the first night of the assembly. These "Manikins" were mechanical creations from Australia that resembled puppets and did "all sort of mischievous little tricks" to keep the children laughing every minute (Ellison-White, 1917, p. 20).

As the years went by, plays and operas became larger productions and dramatic readings completely faded away. Theatrical productions became the main attraction of the entire Chautauqua meeting, often taking up several pages in the program. In the program for the Chautauqua in Austin, Texas in 1917 the information for the comic opera "The Chimes of Normandie" fills three pages, which included a two-page spread of photographs of the production. Later circuit Chautauquas in Cuero, Texas in 1921 and 1929 include several photographs of theatrical productions and advertise that the productions are hit plays featuring Broadway performers. This shift in attitude toward the types of performers that audiences wanted to see was a part of the change in public taste that led to the disappearance of Chautauquas, as growth in audience expectations and experiences and developments in technology, such as the radio and automobiles, drew many people away from Chautauquas by the middle of the 1930s.

## CONCLUSION

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, arts education and arts programs were largely inaccessible to citizens living in rural communities. The

Chautauqua Movement provided arts education and arts program to a wider audience as a part the plan to provide "cultural" education to the masses. Most of the arts education experiences in the Chautauqua Movement were found at the public gatherings. These experiences included lectures and demonstrations by visual artists, musical performances from a variety of styles, and theatrical productions that ranged from classic Shakespeare productions to contemporary Broadway plays. Chautauqua's at-home programs in arts education included mostly visual art experiences such as the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk and several books about art and art history topics on the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC) reading list. By studying the arts education programs offered in the Chautauqua Movement, we learn about early community-based arts education and perhaps find new inspiration for our educational programs today.

# Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study explored arts education programs in the Chautauqua Movement during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Chautauqua Movement was a nationwide phenomenon that combined education with entertainment. The Chautauqua Movement began with a single meeting by the scenic Chautauqua Lake in rural New York in 1874, and soon spread across the United States reaching the height of its success in the 1920s. Providing "cultural" education and experiences to rural citizens was one goal of the Chautauqua Movement and the arts played a large role in reaching this goal. For the purposes of this study, arts education and programs in the Chautauqua Movement included visual art, music, and theatre.

The Chautauqua Movement can be divided into three phases for study: (a) the original Chautauqua meeting in rural New York, (b) the independent Chautauqua meetings, and (c) the circuit Chautauqua meetings. Chautauqua's programs for study at home existed separately from the timeline of the three phases of public meetings and should be considered separately. These at-home programs included the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Society (CLSC), which provided a course for at-home study with an annual reading list and was completed in four years, and the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk, which instructed children at home much like CLSC did with adults.

Chautauqua meetings eventually faded away after the introduction of newer technologies into leisure time entertainment, such as the radio and motion pictures, in the 1920s and 1930s, but much can be learned from them. Examining these arts programs

provides us with the opportunity to learn about the history of early community-based arts education and may provide inspiration for future programs.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the following questions: What type of arts education programs did Chautauqua offer between the original Chautauqua meeting in 1874 and 1930? What art education programs did the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC) and other similar at-home programs offer to citizens in this same time period?

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In this study, I used historical methodology to research art education programs in the Chautauqua Movement. I combined information from historical studies situated in books and articles with firsthand information found in memoirs, event programs, and photographs. Through this research, I identified and discussed the presence of a variety of visual art, music, and theatre programs in the three phases of the Chautauqua Movement and in Chautauqua's at-home study programs.

Visual art was represented at the original Chautauqua site in rural New York by a School of Art, which held classes during the summer on topics such as photography, ceramics, and painting. In the independent and circuit Chautauquas, artists gave lectures and demonstrations including the famous chalk talks, a lecture accompanied by a quick sketch with colored chalk. There were several books about art and art history on the

annual assigned reading list of the CLSC. The Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk, an activity desk designed for children, was another component of Chautauqua's at-home programs. The Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk contained lessons on drawing landscapes and portraits in addition to other practical lessons of the time such as telegraphy and shorthand.

Music was an important part of Chautauqua beginning with the first assembly in 1874. At this initial assembly, audiences sang hymns, heard choral performances, and listened to a band by the scenic Lake Chautauqua. A School of Music was established at the original Chautauqua site in 1879, which held music classes in the summer. Several successful concerts by the New York Symphony also took place at the original Chautauqua site. In the independent Chautauqua meetings, music was included in the program as a part of Christian religious services and for special events, like a Fourth of July concert. Musical ensembles of a variety of sizes and styles dominated the later circuits. One Chautauqua assembly could include performances by several different musical ensembles including vocalists and other musicians from throughout the world. Music was a small part of Chautauqua's at-home programs, with only one book on the CLSC reading list and one lesson for the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk related to music.

Theatre was largely absent from the early Chautauquas. This was due to concerns from churchgoers, who frequented Chautauqua gatherings, about the moral value of theatre, which was often seen solely as a hedonistic form of entertainment. In the independent Chautauquas, theatre included dramatic readings, which featured a single

performer reading a play on a platform or stage. Theatre flourished in the circuit Chautauquas due to the audience's increased interest in being entertained at Chautauqua meetings. Performances included operas and plays with some that were described as hit plays from Broadway. Theatre was also absent from Chautauqua's at-home art programs because theatre required the element of performance and therefore would be difficult to produce at home.

Arts programs were an important part of the Chautauqua Movement in both Chautauqua's public gatherings and Chautauqua's programs for at-home study. Investigating these programs provided insight into an early community-based arts education program and demonstrated a complete arts experience for the audience by including visual art, music, and theatre together in one program.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this study I uncovered a wide range of various arts programs in the Chautauqua Movement, but arts programs were only one part of this movement. There is much more that can be learned from studying this national phenomenon and other education programs from the past.

A topic that could be explored in more detail is an investigation into the lives of Chautauqua performers or artists, organizers, and authors. It would be interesting to learn how their individual backgrounds motivated them to lead and participate in Chautauquas, and how this participation in Chautauquas affected their lives. Chautauquas featured a large number of visual artists and lecturers, musicians, and theatrical performers. Fruitful

research could be undertaken into the lives and activities of Chautauqua organizers in any of the three phases of the movement. The authors and organizers associated with Chautauqua's at-home programs, such as the CLSC and Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk, could provide insight into early correspondence and extension courses popular at this time.

Another avenue for potential research is further investigation into physical objects and photographs associated with the Chautauqua Movement. This study included information gathered from the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk, event programs, CLSC textbooks, and photographs, but it is likely there are more physical objects available for study. Finding objects such as photographs, song books, art supplies or projects, scripts, costumes for plays, manuals for putting on Chautauquas, and tents that housed Chautauqua meetings in an a local history museum or archive may be useful in initiating or carrying out future research. It is likely there are intriguing objects related to Chautauqua gatherings situated in local history museums, and perhaps attics and basements, throughout the country.

In addition to printed sources and physical objects, an oral history project on the Chautauqua Movement may be a valuable study. There are people now in their 80s and 90s that attended Chautauqua meetings in their youth and could provide firsthand accounts of their experience. This would add another dimension beyond what we can read in printed sources or see in photographs. It is important to do this research soon, because with an aging population before long we will not have access to these firsthand accounts.

I would also invite researchers to investigate art education histories in their own communities. Art education history is all around us and I found that the more I looked, the more local programs I uncovered. In my research it appeared that most states held at least one Chautauqua gathering, and Chautauqua's at-home study programs were available across the United States. Many independent Chautauquas followed the example of the original Chautauqua and held schools or classes locally in addition to public meetings. The collections in local history museums and archives may hold documents, objects, or other evidence that would aid research on historic Chautauqua programs. Speaking with family members and looking through family photo albums and keepsake collections, may also initiate future research on the Chautauqua Movement. Exploring the community around you or one that holds a particular interest has the potential to reveal untold histories of art education.

## CONCLUSION

My research began with a simple inquiry into the origins of the word Chautauqua, which is the name of a hill located on the Texas State University campus in San Marcos. This query grew into a much larger investigation. After reading Gladney's (2000) book chapter I decided to do some research on the word Chautauqua. I discovered that an independent Chautauqua assembly was held on Chautauqua Hill in San Marcos, Texas just a few years before the university was founded. I learned the answer to my question, and much more. I discovered that Chautauqua was not only the name of hill on the campus where I studied as an undergraduate student, but was also the name of nationwide

phenomenon that included hundreds and possibly thousands of public gatherings. From this experience I learned that art education is all around us. We will only see it, however, if we pause and take a look around. I attended Texas State for four years and was unaware of this fascinating history until I began the initial stages of this research.

Arts programs played an important role in the "cultural" education that the Chautauqua Movement sought to provide. These arts programs in Chautauqua's public gatherings included chalk talks and artist demonstrations, musical performances from ensembles with different sizes and styles, and theatrical productions that ranged from dramatic readings featuring only one performer to full scale Broadway plays. Chautauqua's at-home programs provided the opportunity for Chautauqua goers to extend their experience and learn from home. Arts programs were also a part the at-home programs. There were several books on the CLSC reading list about art and art history and the Chautauqua Industrial Art Desk provided an opportunity for children to learn at home much like the adults did with the CLSC.

This study has added to our body of knowledge about the history of art education in community environments. Less is written in the history of art education about art education that took place outside the traditional setting of schools. Studying historical programs that provided opportunities in arts education, such as the Chautauqua Movement, enable us the opportunity to learn from an often overlooked program that helped shape art education in the twentieth century. This study also took a more inclusive approach to studying the arts by including visual art, music, and theatre. This broader view of the arts provides a more complete art experience for the audience.

Through my research on arts programs in the Chautauqua Movement during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I learned about an important and often overlooked program that provided arts education opportunities to thousands of people. The variety of offerings included in Chautauqua meetings and the CLSC reading list, along with their success and wide appeal, made them a useful and engaging subject for study. The Chautauqua Movement contained something for nearly every taste in both the public gatherings and at-home courses by including artist demonstrations, hit Broadway plays, symphony performances, science and nature lectures, religious sermons, classical Greek studies, classes on typing and bookkeeping, and children's programs. Although many of these programs existed over a century ago, their ideas continue to inspire and influence educators and researchers today.

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